

**Children's Mental Health Becomes First Bill Passed by the Senate,
Gov. Holden's State of the State Shows Uncooperative Mentality**

The Missouri Senate unanimously approved my Children's Mental Health Reform Act and sent it to the to House of Representatives for consideration. Fixing this problem is a top priority for the Senate, and this is why it has been our first piece of legislation to pass this year.

If passed into law, this bill would reform and reorganize the state's children's mental health services and stop the grievous wrong that is currently the only solution for parents of children with mental illnesses. At present, parents who are not Medicaid eligible and whose are told their insurance will no longer cover their child's medical expenses are given very few options. They are told that if they fully relinquish custody of their child to the state, they will get the help they need. Not only are these parents faced with the decision on whether or not to give up custody of their child, they then lose any decision-making control over their child's care and when their child will be returned to them. As a further insult, they are placed on the Child Abuse and Neglect Registry for abandonment and neglect.

This issue has gone on far too long and must be changed. As the first bill through the Senate, we are showing that this is a serious situation that the Senate is working to fix as quickly as possible.

On Wednesday, Governor Bob Holden gave the annual State of the State address, showing a brief attempt at reconciliation with the Republican Party, but quickly changed his tune. I was personally disappointed at the address, which proved that we would not even be able to start this year's session with a bi-partisan mentality. His address started in a conciliatory tone, showing an attempt by his office to work together, which is something I believe would be a tremendous benefit in working through many of the state's current issues.

I was disappointed, however, that halfway through his address, Gov. Holden reverted back to accusations and attacks at the legislature. I believe that bi-partisan cooperation is necessary to achieve the successes we need for the state, such as balancing the budget, reforming government spending and tax issues.

Despite getting off on the wrong foot, I intend to push for better fiscal management by the government, better tax policy that brings us up to speed with the 21st century, through review of the budget process in the hopes to put us back on the right track for the future of the state.

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